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1880

# HAND-BOOK OF EMBROIDERY;

KENSINGTON STITCHES

DESCRIBED AND ILLUSTRATED.

AS TAUGHT AT THE

Royal School of Art-Needlework,

AT SOUTH KENSINGTON, ENGLAND.

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PRICE, 10 CENTS.

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1880.



## THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF ART-NEEDLEWORK

was founded in 1872 at South Kensington, England, under the Presidency of H. R. H. the Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, for the two-fold purpose of supplying suitable employment for Gentlewomen and restoring Ornamental Needlework to the high place it once held among the decorative arts.

It was first established under the title of School of Art-Needlework, but in 1875 Her Majesty the Queen was graciously pleased to grant to it the prefix of "Royal."

The Royal School of Art-Needlework exhibited at the Centennial Exhibition of Philadelphia, 1876, and received a Certificate of Award. A Silver Medal was also granted by the Jurors of the International Exhibition, Paris, 1878, for embroideries exhibited there.

This School has been very popular in England and Scotland. Its popularity has extended to this country, and is growing rapidly.

# STITCHES USED IN HAND EMBROIDERY

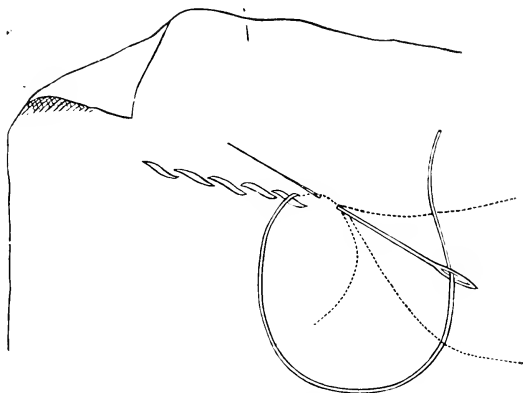
AS TAUGHT AT THE

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To avoid pulling or puckering the work, care should be taken—firstly, that the needle is not too small, so as to require any force in drawing it through the material; secondly, the material must be held in a convex position over the fingers, so that the crewel or silk in the needle shall be looser than the ground; and thirdly, not to use too long needlefuls. These rules apply generally to all handworked embroideries.

## STITCHES.

*Stem Stitch.*—The first stitch which is taught to a beginner is “stem stitch.” It is most useful in work done in the hand, and especially in outlines of flowers, unshaded leaves, and arabesque, and all conventional designs.

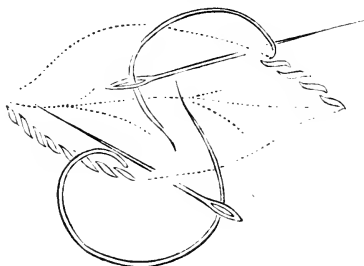


Illustration, No. 1.—STEM STITCH.

It may be best described as a long stitch forward on the surface, and a shorter one backward on the under side of the fab-

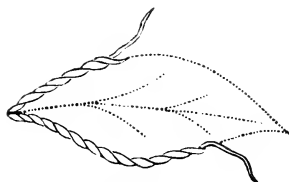
ric, the stitches following each other almost in line from left to right. The effect on the wrong side is exactly that of an irregular back-stitching used by dressmakers, as distinguished from regular stitching. A leaf worked in outline should be begun at the lower or stalk end, and worked round the right side to the top, taking care that the needle is to the left of the thread as it is drawn out. When the point of the leaf is reached, it is best to reverse the operation in working down the left side towards the stalk again, so as to keep the needle to the right of the thread instead of to the left, as in going up.

The reason of this will be easily understood: we will suppose the leaf to have a slightly serrated edge (and there is no



Illustration, No. 2.

leaf in nature with an absolutely smooth one). It will be found that in order to give this ragged appearance, it is necessary to have the points at which the insertions of the needle occur on the outside of the leaf: whereas if the stem stitch were continued down the left side, exactly in the same manner as in ascending the right, we should have the ugly anomaly of a leaf outlined thus:—

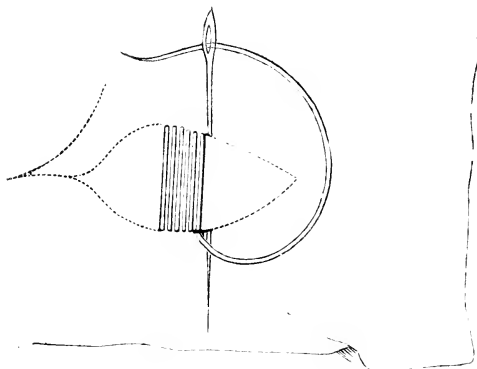


Illustration, No. 3.

If the leaf is to be worked "solidly," another row of stem stitching must be taken up the centre of it (unless it be a very

narrow leaf), to the top. The two halves of the leaf must then be filled in, separately, with close, even rows of stem stitch, worked in the ordinary way with the needle to the left of the thread. This will prevent the ugly ridge which remains in the centre, if it is worked round and round the inside of the outline. Stem stitch must be varied according to the work in hand. If a perfectly even line is required, care must be taken that the direction of the needle when inserted is in a straight line with the preceding stitch. If a slight serrature is required, each stitch must be sloped a little by inserting the needle at a slight angle, as shown in the illustration.

The length of the surface stitches must vary to suit the style of each piece of embroidery.



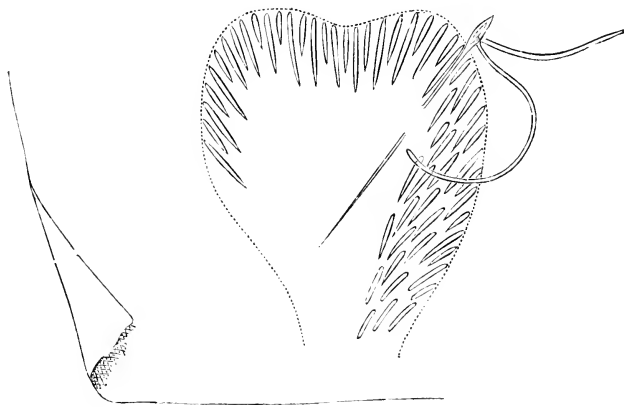
Illustration, No. 4.—SATIN STITCH.

*Satin Stitch—French Plumetis*—is one of those chiefly used in white embroidery, and consists in taking the needle each time back again almost to the spot from which it started, so that the same amount of crewel or silk remains on the back of the work as on the front. This produces a surface as smooth as satin: hence its name. It is chiefly used in working the petals of small flowers, such as “forget-me-nots,” and in arabesque designs where a raised effect is wanted in small masses.

*Blanket Stitch* is used for working the edges of table-covers, mantel valances, blankets, &c., or for edging any other material.

It is simply a button-hole stitch, and may be varied in many ways by sloping the stitches alternately to right and left; by working two or three together, and leaving a space between them and the next set; or by working a second row round the edge of the cloth over the first with a different shade of wool.

*Feather Stitch.*—Vulgarly called “*long and short stitch*,” “*long stitch*,” and sometimes “*embroidery stitch*.” We propose to restore to it its ancient title of feather stitch—“*Opus Plumarium*,” so called from its supposed resemblance to the plumage of a bird.



Illustration, No. 10. — FEATHER STITCH.

These two modes differ very little in appearance, as the principle is the same, namely, that the stitches are of varying length, and are worked into and between each other, adapting themselves to the form of the design, but in handwork the needle is kept on the surface of the material.

Feather Stitch is generally used for embroidering flowers, whether natural or conventional.

In working the petal of a flower (such as we have chosen for our illustration), the outer part is first worked in with stitches which form a close, even edge on the outline, but a broken one towards the centre of the petal, being alternately long and



short. These edging stitches resemble satin stitch in so far that the same amount of crewel or silk appears on the under, as on the upper side of the work: they must slope towards the narrow part of the petal.

The next stitches are somewhat like an irregular "stem," inasmuch as they are longer on the surface than on the under side, and are worked in between the uneven lengths of the edging stitches so as to blend with them. The petal is then filled up by other stitches, which start from the centre, and are carried between those already worked.

When the petal is finished, the rows of stitches should be so merged in each other that they cannot be distinguished, and when shading is used, the colors should appear to melt into each other.

In serrated leaves, such as hawthorn or Virginia creeper, the edging stitches follow the broken outline of the leaf instead of forming an even outer edge.

It is necessary to master thoroughly this most important stitch, but practice only can make the worker perfect.

The work should always be started by running the thread a little way in front of the embroidery. Knots should never be used except in rare cases, when it is impossible to avoid them. The thread should always be finished off on the surface of the work, never at the back, where there should be no needless waste of material. No untidy ends or knots should ever appear there; in fact, the wrong side should be quite as neat as the right. It is a mistake to suppose that pasting will ever do away with the evil effects of careless work, or will steady embroidery which has been commenced with knots, and finished with loose ends at the back.

The stitches vary constantly according to their application, and good embroiderers differ in their manner of using them: some preferring to carry the thread back towards the centre of the petal, on the surface of the work, so as to avoid waste of material; others making their stitches as in satin stitch—the same on both sides, but these details may be left to the intelligence and taste of the worker, who should never be afraid of trying experiments, or working out new ideas.

Nor should she ever fear to unpick her work: for only by



experiment can she succeed in finding the best combinations, and one little piece ill done, will be sufficient to spoil her whole embroidery, as no touching-up can afterwards improve it.

We have now named the principal stitches used in hand-embroidery, whether to be executed in crewel or silk.

There are, however, numberless other stitches used in crewel embroidery: such as ordinary stitching, like that used in plain needlework, in which many designs were formerly traced on quilted backgrounds—others, again, are many of them lace stitches, or forms of herringbone, and are used for filling in the foliage of large conventional floriated designs, such as we are accustomed to see in the English crewel work of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, on a twilled cotton material, resembling our modern Bolton sheeting.

It would be impossible to describe or even enumerate them all; as varieties may be constantly invented by an ingenious worker to enrich her design, and in lace work there are already 100 named stitches, which occasionally are used in decorative embroidery. Most of these, if required, can be shown as taught at the Royal School of Art-Needlework, and are illustrated by samplers.

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